

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Age: 22

Gender preference: Female

How long you've been attending ybw: 3 years and 8 months

State before beginning:

Mental State: insecurity, low-mid self esteem, lack of self-confidence, anxiety and grief over family events

Level of activity: attending YBW about once a week, walking

Challenges faced: pushing myself in session, committing to the workout

What brought you to YBW:

My friend had heard of the program and we attended our first session together. Having recently 'wasted' a contract gym membership, I was pleasantly surprised by how sore YBW's sessions made me feel the next day, and I thought to myself that this program is doing something for me that feels better already than my previous experiences in fitness environments.

What has been the biggest change youve seen from attending YBW:

Changing my perspective on my body image. The more that I have attended classes regularly, pushed my capabilities further and committed to the program, the more I have had a better relationship with my body. I feel strong and capable. YBW made me feel ready to enter a more challenging boxing fitness environment, and now I attend classes with pro-boxers around me. I have had pretty low self-esteem in regards to my body image for most of my life, and now I have transcended feeling the need to be 'slim' into the need to be strong, fit and comfortable. This has been one of the biggest impacts for me, and it has contributed to my level of confidence in everyday life.

What impact has attending YBW had on your mental health and/or eating/wellness habits:

There have been countless times I have attended a YBW class when I have been struggling with anxiety, or I've had a rough day in terms of my mental health, and less than 10minutes later I feel so much like myself again. Prior to starting YBW, I never identified as sporty or interested particularly in working out. I merely saw it as a way to stay healthy. It was realising how much boxing and YBW affected my mental health that completely changed my perspective on working out. Reconnecting to my body and being required to focus takes me out of states of anxiety in whatever form it exists in at the time. Now I have found it is a necessity in my weekly work life. As someone who works as a freelance artist, it has become as important to me in doing good work as getting enough sleep is. I make sure I attend boxing at least twice a week, three times preferred. In terms of eating I experience waves of conscious eating. Now I'm no longer bothered about exercising to lose weight - my mental is a bigger priority than the physical - I don't let obsession or self criticism take over like it has in the past.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Age: 21

Gender preference: Female /nb / whatever

How long you've been attending ybw

Since April 2018, so 2 years ish

State before:

When I first came to boxing, I was early in my undergrad studies at university. A lot of my friends had moved interstate to study, which was a pretty hard transition for me. I felt quite isolated and often felt anxious and awkward going into social situations where I didn't know many people.

Level of activity /Challenges faced

Before YBW the only exercise I did somewhat regularly was running. Although I loved, and still love running, I had a complicated relationship with it. Throughout high school I learned to exercise as a punishment for eating or for my body not looking or feeling how I wanted it to. I would also feel really guilty if I didn't exercise for long enough, hard enough or often enough. During PE in high school I would avoid really trying because I didn't want to fail or look dumb in front of the boys in my year who were always harsh and competitive.

What brought you to YBW

I wanted to so when I saw a post on Facebook about free boxing classes I decided it'd be worth overcoming my nerves to give it a go.

What has been the biggest change you've seen from attending ybw.

I work in sales where I'm both the youngest and one of the only female demonstrators. The fact I box always seems to come as a surprise to the older men I work with and I really enjoy them struggling to redefine their assumptions about me. From the ybw support base I feel calmer within myself and have greater belief in my capabilities. I feel like there is less of a barrier to me breaking other stereotypes, giving me the confidence to hold my ground and be assertive.

What impact has attending ybw had on your mental health and/or eating/wellness habits

When I first began attending ybw it felt like the only time in my week when I was consciously in my body and where I could engage in real conversation. It was so valuable being in an environment where people were willing to share experiences and be vulnerable, and also wanted me to contribute and share my ideas. I have a lot of love for the YBW support network and all the people who participate and build it. Although I definitely still deal with anxiety, I am able to contextualise better, knowing I can handle stressful situations head on if I need to. But I am most grateful for the relationship I now have with myself. Not only do I feel mentally and physically stronger, but I now see exercise as a kindness and investment in myself rather than a punishment. I feel joy in my body, I am capable and I am determined to keep building myself up.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Age: 22

Gender preference: Female

How long you've been attending ybw: 3 years.

State before beginning:

Severe mental health issues, recent hospitalisation, drug abuse issues, eating disorders and suicidal tendencies, level of activity; next to none, challenges faced; in terms of exercise, it was hard to practice exercise and general healthy habits without slipping into problematic behaviours such as starving myself etc.

Level of activity /Challenges faced:

Brought to ybw after being discharged from hospital for a suicide attempt, someone basically dragged me because they knew I'd enjoy it and that I needed something to build my mental and physical health, I was very resistant to attend my first class, and half way through the warm up I went out for a cigarette.

What has been the biggest change you've seen from attending ybw/What impact has attending ybw had on your mental health and/or eating/wellness habits:

I've seen many changes in myself since joining, the some of the biggest being my attitude to my health and body, I don't address exercise as a way to achieve a certain body type, but instead a way to feel healthy and strong. I remember before joining, I used to genuinely think to myself, I would rather be sick, I would rather lose abilities or anything else if it meant having the body I desired, and I realised that I would rather have a body type that had always been my worst fear, than quit boxing and ybw. Like if for some weird reason I had to make that choice, I would choose boxing over, looking the way I've almost died for in the past. I feel strong and confident, and most importantly I value my body as what it is, a vessel that allows me to do all the things I want and need to do. I'm also still in contact with all the friends I made since they've become some of the most important people in my life, my friends from ybw aren't just my friends but my role models, they make me want to be better today than I was yesterday, everyday of my life